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How It Got Here: Teaching 'Format as Process' in an Era of Web-Scale Discovery

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HOW IT GOT HERE

Teaching “Format as Process” in an Era of Web-Scale Discovery

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Define “Format as a Process”
2. Apply the Concept to Information Literacy Instruction

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

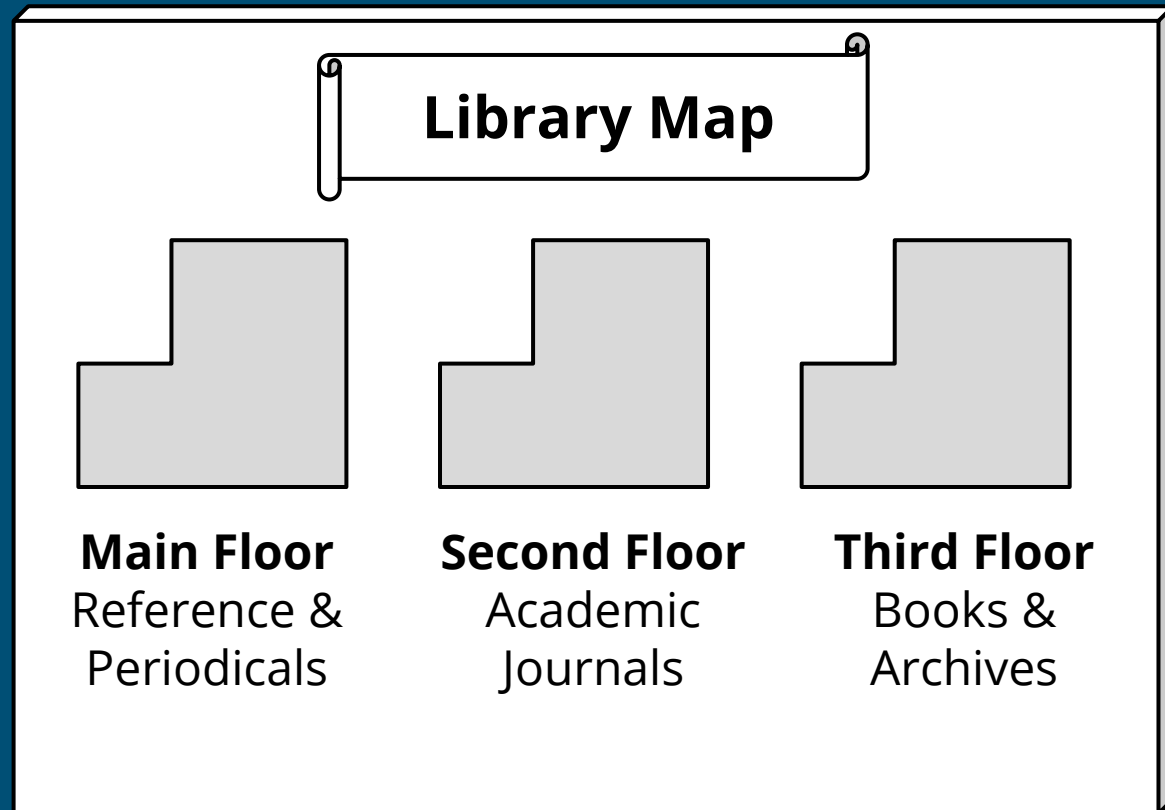
The way we
search keeps
changing.

We need to
teach things
which are
constant.

THE OLD WAY OF
DOING THINGS...

LIBRARY INSTRUCTION AS GEOGRAPHY LESSON

“I want students to know how to do research, so could you give them a tour of the library?”



LEARNING OUTCOME

Students navigate **the building** to locate appropriate sources.

ASSESSMENT

Are students able to find appropriate sources **on the shelf**?

Effective when:

Students are in a specific library.

Collection locations are static.

Print sources are enough to meet needs.

LIBRARY INSTRUCTION AS GRAPHIC DESIGN SEMINAR

“I want students to know how to do research, so could you show them what good sources look like?”

Scholarly Article

A. Scholar, Ph.D.
University of Examples

MAGAZINE!

**PAID
ADVERTISEMENT**

LEARNING OUTCOME

Students identify sources based on
visual cues and **formatting**.

ASSESSMENT

Can students distinguish **one type of**
source from another?

Effective when:

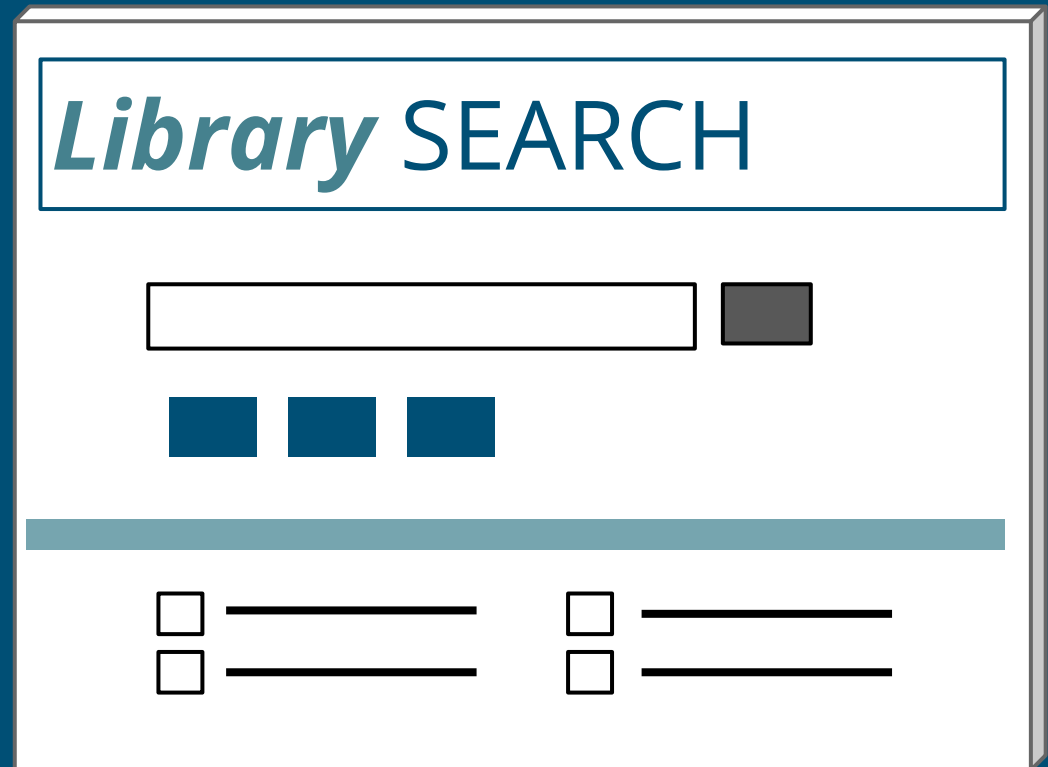
- All sources follow set formatting rules.

- There is a limited number of source types.

- Every format can be explained.

LIBRARY INSTRUCTION AS DATABASE TUTORIAL

“I want students to know how to do research, so could you show them the library databases?”



Library SEARCH

☐ ☐ ☐

☐ _____ ☐ _____
☐ _____ ☐ _____

LEARNING OUTCOME

Students **manipulate a database** to locate appropriate sources.

ASSESSMENT

Are students aware of **database functions**?
Do they apply them?

Effective when:

Database interfaces are static.

Every database can be demonstrated.

Library databases are the only tool used.

SO WHAT CHANGED?

The shift to
Web-Scale
Discovery
has put more
sources into
simpler
interfaces.

LIBRARIANS ARE **DIVIDED** ON
THE VALUE OF WEB-SCALE...

...but many users prefer the
simpler interfaces, and more
and more libraries are
implementing these platforms.

So what is
“library instruction”
in an era of
web-scale discovery?

Now we can focus
on just teaching
the one interface...
...right?

WRONG.



Kevin Seeber

@kevinseeber

Ebsco is 86'ing Visual Search. I learned this fact ~40 min before a class where, yes, I had planned on demo'ing visual search. New plan!

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12:36 PM - 16 Jul 2013

Reply to @kevinseeber

THE EPIPHANY:

Any instruction based
on static interfaces,
locations, or
appearances
is not **sustainable**.

WHAT'S MORE:

Search tools keep getting simpler, while pulling in more and more types of results.

THE

SOLUTION: Don't teach
the interface,
teach the
results.

WE NEED TO FOCUS ON CRITICAL EVALUATION

Information Literacy is
not about knowing “how.”

It's about knowing “why.”

[ENTER THE FRAMEWORK]

FORMAT AS A PROCESS.

“What makes a book a book and a newspaper article a newspaper article has nothing to do with how one accesses it (print/digital), but with the process that went into creating it. Understanding this principle helps students navigate the information they find online and evaluate it according to the process underlying its creation, rather than by a set of memorized, constantly changing, inconsistent characteristics.”

Hofer, A.R., Townsend, L. and & Brunetti, K. (2012), “Threshold concepts and information literacy: Investigating threshold concepts for IL instruction.” *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, Vol. 12 No. 4, pp. 387-405.

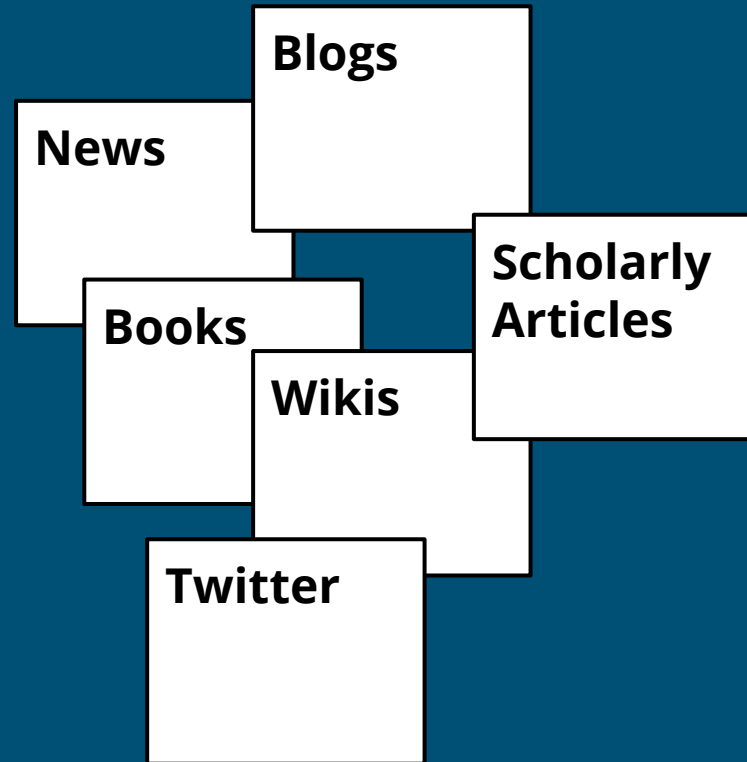
WHY FORMAT AS A PROCESS WORKS:

It does not rely on a fixed interface or location. It's applicable in any information seeking context.

HOW DOES THIS
WORK IN PRACTICE?

LIBRARY INSTRUCTION AS DISCUSSION OF PROCESS

“I want students to know how to do research, so could you show them why some sources are better than others?”



FOCUS ON THE PROCESS

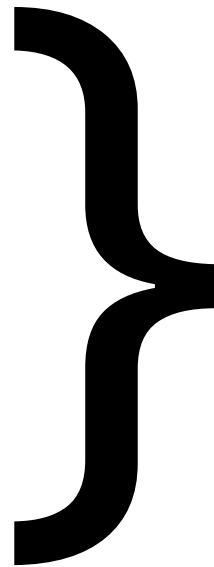
not the
format.

Discuss
processes
objectively.

NO FORMAT
IS ALWAYS
THE “BEST”
SOURCE.

IDENTIFY HOW PROCESSES MAKE SOMETHING BETTER OR WORSE.

Editing
Research
Time



These all
have benefits
and
limitations

Use process to discuss
AUTHORITY.

Why are some processes
privileged
over others?

Avoid Visual Cues.

Process is invisible.

ENGAGE
IN A
PROCESS.

Blog.
Tweet.
Edit Wikipedia.

Create
information.

USE FORMATS
TO EXPLAIN
THE INTERFACE

(not vice versa)

PEER REVIEW IS NOT A FACET

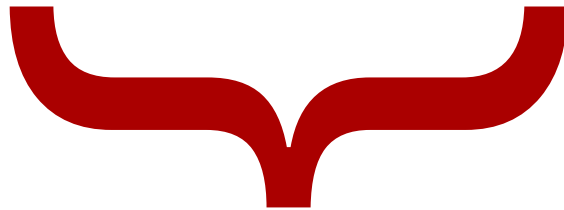
It is a process
represented by a facet.

(Ceci n'est pas une pipe, etc.)

CONNECT SKILLS TO OTHER SEARCH AREAS.

Web-Scale
Discovery

Search
Engines



These have a lot in common.

ASSESS
THEIR
THINKING,
NOT THEIR
SOURCES.

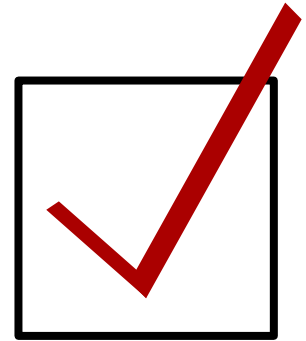
A
bibliography
does not tell
us what they
learned.

SAMPLE ASSESSMENT

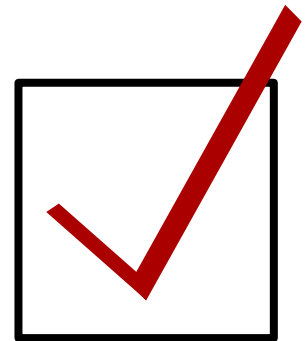
“What can you tell about how this source was made?”

“What about that process makes this a ‘good’ source for you to use?”

SAMPLE RUBRIC



Can students **identify** a **formative process** inherent to the format?



Can they **qualify** how that process contributes to the **authority** or **relevance** of the source?

STUDENTS DO NOT
NEED TO KNOW EVERY
FORMAT.

They only need
to recognize the
role of **process**.

LEARNING OUTCOME

Students **reflect on formative processes** when evaluating sources.

ASSESSMENT

Do students **consider process**, and does that reflection influence source selection?

Effective when:

- They search in multiple environments.

- Formats take on a variety of shapes.

- Students are capable of critical reflection.

IN TIME, THIS CRITICAL
REFLECTION EXTENDS BEYOND
THE SOURCE TO EXAMINE THE
PROCESSES WHICH CREATE AND
DISTRIBUTE THOSE SOURCES.

ELMBORG
TELLS US
THAT:

Information Literacy

“is more than a set of acquired skills. It involves the comprehension of an entire system of thought and the ways that information flows in that system.”

“ULTIMATELY, IT ALSO
INVOLVES THE CAPACITY TO
CRITICALLY EVALUATE THE
SYSTEM ITSELF.”

Elmborg, J. (2006), “Critical information literacy: Implications for instruction practice,” *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, Vol. 32 No. 4, pp. 311-29.

The lessons they are
learning are

SUSTAINABLE.

Critical evaluation is a
lifelong skill.

WHAT'S THE CATCH?

This is not the kind of learning that happens in a one-shot.

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